

## French Circular.

The Government of the National Defense has addressed the following important Circular to the French Diplomatic Agents abroad:

Tours, October 10th.

Monsieur: M. de Bismarck, on the 13th and 14th of September last, has addressed to the Diplomatic Agents of the Northern Confederation two Circulars, calculated to justify in the eyes of Europe the exacting demands of Prussia. The arguments of the Chancellor, which he afterwards repeated at Ferrières in his conversations with M. Jules Favre, convey in substance, that if Prussia has a desire to annex territories, it is not in the spirit of conquest, but solely to assure to Germany a lasting peace, and to guard her against the attacks which it has been at all times the object of France to make. He wishes, he says, to shelter Germany from the incursions of a warlike neighbor, whose ambition has not ceased for centuries from menacing the security and independence of the German people. It is not the first time that M. de Bismarck ascribes to those whom he wishes to attack the very projects which he himself entertains. We can not admit either the premises which he sets forth, or the consequences which he deduces therefrom. France is not what he wishes to make her. A hasty glance at her history does not permit this judgment of her. Let us take facts, and inquire what France has been aiming at for the last century—a period sufficient to become acquainted with the spirit of a nation. It is the duty of nations to remain bound by their past policy, but this obligation only pledges their honor, and progress for them would be a word devoid of sense if they were condemned to travel always in the groove in which interests last sight of, or passions hereafter without object, obliged them. France of today no more resembles the France governed by Louis XIV. than Germany of today does the Holy Empire. The war of conquest was at that epoch, it is not the right, at least the common practice of Monarchies. The Revolution of 1789 had as its result a political change; peace is a condition necessary to liberty. France made for herself a new ideal; sufficiently strong henceforth to be independent, she sought less to dominate over the people than to enlighten them by her example. That which she had just accomplished in America for the United States, she was ready to re-commence in Europe. Who endeavored to extinguish the light which she thus shed around her? Who rose up in arms to arrest in its first flight the genius of the French Revolution? No ingenuity of language, no historical skill will prevail against this fact: the Revolution of 1789 opened up a new era, and broke down the traditions of the past: Prussia was the first to fight against it.

From the invasion of 1792 dates the beginning of those fatal rivalries which were eventually to bring about the present calamities. France repulsed aggression; but she was carried away, we acknowledge it, beyond legitimate reprisals. She had suffered cruel injuries; she allowed herself to be overcome by the intoxication of victory. Jena was a revenge. Leipzig and Waterloo followed, and reminded the French that it is permitted a people for a time to renounce their own independence, they can not with impunity strike a blow at that of other nations.

France, however, recovered from her disasters, and reconquered herself. From the moment at which it became impossible to engage her without her consent, what war has she provoked? Where is seen that spirit of ambition, and eagerness after conquest which M. de Bismarck attributes to us? Who, more than we, during those baneful years, has contributed to the maintenance of peace in Europe? France had already paid dearly for the faults of the first Empire. However much modern opinions were yet fettered, their influence was felt more and more in the foreign policy of the country. Wherever there was a people to deliver, liberties to defend, a moral grandeur to acquire, France was found ready. The Restoration battled for Greece; the Monarchy of July insured the independence of Belgium, and those ideas were so firmly fixed at that period in the conscience of the nation that the second Empire understood that henceforth it must think with them, and proclaim loudly that it thought peace. France believed it. The Empire, however, had need of military prestige, and sought it. But the war which it undertook had a character far different from those of Napoleon I. for it (the second Empire) at times stemmed the pacific current which the nation was bent on following; it did not renounce the principles which the nation had adopted. In the Crimea, France, in company with two free peoples, fought for the independence of Turkey. It was to deliver a friendly nation that our armies sailed the Alps in 1859. The Mexican adventure itself, blamable and disesteemed so energetically, and rightly by the liberal party, could never have been explained but by means of theories, chimerical it is true, but which regulated in advance all thought of conquest. What is there in common between these principles, consecrated by practice of more than half a century, under four different regimes, and the policy of "force and sword" which, since 1864, has been let loose over Europe? What act, or what promise of France can make her answerable? Who spoiled Denmark? openly forced Austria into a violently conceived Hanover, Hesse, Frankfurt, etc. round all Europe's slumbering passions and shook it to its centre? France has only intervened in this crisis to hasten and secure peace.

They talk of the warlike ardor of the nation, and of the petty jealousies which the victories of Prussia had excited. But immediately after Sedan, at the time of the irritating incident of Luxembourg, opinion in France was decidedly declared against war, and the German press itself was obliged to acknowledge it; moderation was found to be on our side. When, finally, the war broke out in the month of July last, who could deny that Prussia had done every thing in her power for the last four years to arrive at this end? Throwing aside her political conduct, and the willful non-performance of the Treaty of Prague, she was formidably armed and ready in eight days to enter upon the campaign. Events have shown to what extent her preparations, undertaken long ago, have been pushed: on the contrary, it is well known how they had been neglected by France. Not only were the armaments of Prussia complete, but her alliances were concluded; she was evidently determined to draw us into a formidable conflict. We can speak freely of this war, for the members of the present Government have done all in their power to turn aside the horrors of war from the country. We loudly proclaim that, notwithstanding the behavior of Prussia, the real motive of the struggle was not justifiable; and M. de Bismarck could not seriously stigmatize us with the publications of certain writers, and the manifestations of an excited mob. These were isolated acts, without support in the country, and which did not go beyond the confused agitation which all public emotion raises in great cities.

M. de Bismarck knows the value of these things. What people, however, will not allow themselves to be easily carried away at the first cry of war? Governments are always sure to kindle enthusiasm when they promise glory and triumph. That is why their responsibility is so great. But at the first check, when they are not going along with opinion, their fall is inevitable. This result has been produced as well under the second as under the first Empire. Both must of necessity fall; enterprises which they were pursuing were unjust. As to the affirmation of M. de Bismarck that the Empire was coerced by public opinion, the very facts give him an unqualified denial. Consulted at the time of the Legislative elections of 1869, the people had affirmed in the most energetic manner their love of peace. The same tendencies were shown, and very explicitly, at the time of the plebiscite of the 9th of May, 1870, to such an extent that two months afterwards, the Government had for the first time for many years to reduce the contingent of the army.

This concession, demanded by the state of feeling, proves with all the evidence of an actual fact how far France was from all warlike ideas in the month of July. The renewal of the councils general had again, a short time previous, furnished a fresh occasion for the display of these aspirations. But we even possess an official document which proves in the most formal manner that, far from having been led away by public opinion, the Empire, on the contrary, was seriously perplexed to know if it would be followed by it. So little was it assured of its obedience, on a declaration of war, that it was thought necessary to take its opinion expressly on this subject. The Prefect received orders to report to the Minister of Interior the impressions caused in the departments by this sudden news. Their replies, published since that time in the *Journal Officiel*, after the 2nd of October, leave no ground for any doubt. The first impulse has been astonishment and surprise," wrote one Prefect. Others say: "This news, bursting forth in the midst of a profound calm, has caused great emotion." "A war is considered as great a scourge that we do not wish to believe it." The ardent desire of maintaining peace displayed itself everywhere. "I believe that at bottom we dread war," wrote one of the most popular and enlightened of the departments. "No one," said another Prefect, "wishes for war, should it be the result of the great social weakness that is spreading over the country." "This country wants peace," also wrote another; "it will only accept war with repugnance," and others in the same style. "The population, certainly do not want war, and long ardently for peace."

Everywhere burst forth this sentiment: that we would only accept war if it was for the honor of the country. We clung with eagerness to the last hope of peace. "When it shall be proved," wrote a Prefect, "that everything has been tried to arrive at this result unavailingly, we shall decide to submit to the consequences of a collision of which we are afraid." We could multiply citations. Out of 69 prefects' reports, 11 only mention complete approbation; all the others betray the same prejudice, or the same repugnance. This then is an incontestable fact. Thus it remains established that France did not menace the integrity of Germany; her history for more than half a century proves it on all its pages. She never meditated conquests; aspirations of an opposite nature animated her; and in fact, even while her disposition did not urge her to it, the clearest sense of her interest compelled her to a pacific course. Such is the nation against the incursions of which M. de Bismarck wishes to protect Germany, and the territorial dismemberment of which appears to him the only safe guarantee for the tranquility of the German people. The line of the Rhine, according to him, is no longer sufficient; he wants the line of the Vosges and the Moselle. He must have, now-a-days, Alsace and Lorraine, and this at the very time when Germany has just changed her interior constitution. After 1815, Europe already dreading the expansive force of the German people, strove to give her (Germany) a Constitution, the basis of which was exclusively organized on the defensive, and France, although the treaties of Vienna were directed against her, was left in the state she is found now. Her northern frontier, facing Germany, is entirely open. The results of the present war furnish an indisputable proof of this. And while France has modified nothing in her organization, Germany has raised herself in the most formidable State a power has ever attained: Absolute military unity, personal and direct action from the leader who bears the sword of command, military service obligatory on all, we ask whether France or Germany is now the menacing party? Not more in 1870 than in 1792 has Prussia had need to guard against the attacks of France. It is without doubt that the Prussian Government seeks rather offensive facilities than better lines of defense. One does not see well, in fact, how Germany would be better protected because her frontier would be carried further forward. In case of invasion the country occupied would then be the territory annexed to Germany, and the scene of action would simply be carried from one province into another; and what would be the result of these violent annexations of territories which do not wish to cease being French? Without speaking of the sentiment which is repugnant to every honest mind, of this seeing populations submit to a nationality contrary to their aspirations and their past, it would tend to perpetuate war. In fact, it is possible that the feeling of France could ever be alienated from countries which, having so nobly borne so many misfortunes and so gloriously shed so much blood, are united to her by bonds which cannot be broken. The turmoil which would arise from this would agitate Europe, without the possibility of hoping henceforth for one moment of repose. It is clearly seen in the setting forth of such pretensions, demanding such concessions, M. de Bismarck is making for himself new wars which are necessary to him in order to attain the end to which a boundless ambition is hurrying him on. What the German people want is, national unity and political liberty; liberal France could not be opposed to this. It is a just cause, and we would be repudiating our past policy if we were to oppose it. But there is an abyss between these aspirations and the doctrine evolved and applied by M. de Bismarck. If we weigh the events which have happened in Europe during the last ten years, we must see that Prussia has herself taken the course which she with so much injustice attributes to us. It is not possible to have a doubt in this respect after the reception by M. de Bismarck of M. Jules Favre's noble advances. If France falls, there is yet another war menacing Europe, paralyzing every flight of thought, all civilization, all progress of the prosperity of the people.

France not only struggles for the integrity of her soil, her honor and her independence, but she fights also to maintain the balance of power in Europe. Recuse, Sir, etc.

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